

Liberal Applications: The Relationship Between Academic Major and Sociopolitical Attitudes

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

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Abstract

For many students, coming to college presents opportunities for increased independence. When many students enter Ball State, they are at an age where they are able to register to vote for the first time, and may be thinking about political issues deeply for the first time in their lives. This quantitative and qualitative study aims to decipher whether differences among students' political views have a relationship with their academic major, and the reasons behind these relationships. Quantitative analysis of 205 surveys revealed that these relationships do exist, and qualitative interviews with 9 students gives further insight into why these differences exist. Studying the major groups of social science, communications, business, hard science, double majors, criminal justice, education, humanities, CAP, theater, and computer science, this study provides some insight into Ball State's political canvas which may be of use to college students and faculty alike.

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I would also like to thank my parents, Hope and Ralph Power, for encouraging me to pursue the Honors College four year ago, and for instilling in me the desire to always put my best foot forward.

PROCESS ANALYSIS STATEMENT

Thinking about the Senior Honor's Thesis has been a great source of anxiety for me over the past four years. When thinking about all of the wonderful educational experiences I've had while at Ball State, it seemed inconceivable to me to pick one topic on which I would spend an entire semester. At the beginning of my college career, I was an English major, and had considered writing a piece about women and the history of rhetoric—particularly a woman named Aspasia whose insights on rhetoric are applicable to the modern world of persuasion, despite her “inferior” status as a woman in ancient Greece. However, when I discovered the field of sociology and added it as a major at the end of my junior year, I knew that I wanted to explore the concepts I was learning within this major. For a while, I again considered the ideas of gender and socialized femininity. I wondered if I could analyze t-shirts and other apparel from various popular stores and examine the messages that companies were promoting to young women and girls. While this idea enticed me and probably would have made an interesting thesis, I was not sure that it would help me reach the goals that I hoped to reach by completing this project.

In the first semester of my junior year, I enrolled in a sociological research methods course, in which I learned how to design and carry out my own quantitative research study. As someone who is usually more apt at understanding abstract ideas and theories, I was unsure how I would do with data analysis. However, this course soon became my favorite class I had that semester, and the final paper I produced in that class is one of my proudest accomplishments. I enjoyed working with data because it provided me with a challenge that, upon completing, I felt really great about tackling. It

was at this point that I decided that in my thesis, I wanted to include some quantitative analysis in order to further develop these skills for their future utility in my career.

As a sociologist, I am interested in studying people and social phenomena, as well as the process of socialization—a process through which people within a certain culture are taught to act and perform almost all aspects of their identity based on the environment in which they live. While the idea of gender socialization was intriguing, I concluded that this process would not help me to further explore the world of survey data. When brainstorming ideas for a new topic, I considered my own experience at college, and how transformative of an experience it has been for me. When I arrived at Ball State University nearly four years ago, I was not very interested in politics and the beliefs I did hold were mostly conservative in nature, due to the fact that I grew up in a somewhat conservative household. After my first year in college, I had registered to vote as a Democrat and attended marches and protests for social causes held on Ball State's campus. My political beliefs had done a complete 180-degree turn, and have continued to develop the longer I've been in college. I do attribute this change to the unique environment of a college campus, but I am also aware that my academic majors—English and sociology—are traditionally more liberal majors which likely influenced this shift.

I became curious if anyone else had undergone this dramatic shift as well, or if there were significant differences in political beliefs between majors in general. I saw this topic as a perfect opportunity to conduct quantitative research, and after meeting with my advisor, Dr. Petts, we decided that a qualitative element could be incorporated into the study as well. The common thread between my two academic majors is

research. Sociological research often takes the form of surveying to collect both quantitative and qualitative data, while my experience with research in English is more qualitative and focused on individuals' stories. I was excited at this opportunity to continue the different types of research common in both of my undergraduate fields, as well as to further explore a concept that I have personally experienced since starting at Ball State.

Throughout the process of completing this thesis, I definitely faced some challenges that caused me to learn about myself and further develop a skillset that I know will be useful to me as I enter the job market. The most challenging aspect of this project, other than choosing a topic, was all of the data analysis that it involved. I spent many long hours in the library working in SPSS—a statistical analysis software—and re-running tests after I realized that I had made a mistake. Many emails back and forth with Dr. Petts also helped me to figure out exactly what I needed to do. Although this was the most challenging aspect of the project, it was also the most rewarding. I have often worried that I do not possess many “hard skills,” only the “soft skills” that we focus on in the social sciences and humanities. Through the sociology major and this thesis in particular, I feel confident that I now possess a few “hard” or technical skills in addition to my soft skills. I have always been proud of my ability to write and synthesize information using words, and this thesis allowed me to become proud of my ability to work with numbers and data, and to draw meaningful conclusions from data that I collected and analyzed myself.

My thesis is something that I am extremely proud of. Despite the various challenging academic experiences that I have faced in college, rarely have I had the

chance to work with an entire project for the whole semester, only with myself and my faculty advisor. I am proud of my ability to see this project through from start to finish, enduring all of the challenges that it presented, and ending up with something that I feel is a great culmination of all my academic experiences at Ball State. To me, that's what a Senior Honors Thesis should be; a final capstone on all of the skills and experiences students gain in their four years of college.

I ended up finding out that my experience is somewhat uncommon, but that's not to say that college isn't a transformative experience for students. For most of the students I surveyed and interviewed, college has confirmed their beliefs, caused them to be more open-minded, and given them information which they can use to back up the beliefs they had coming in. Many also noted that meaningful interactions with classmates and course material have caused them to strengthen their views, which supports the sociological concept of socialization which I was originally drawn to. By completing this project, I have gained new skills, become more confident in an area in which I never thought I would thrive, and gained insights into the campus community which I have called home for the past four years.

LIBERAL APPLICATIONS: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ACADEMIC MAJOR AND SOCIOPOLITICAL ATTITUDES

A student's time in college is a time for them to expand their knowledge, their interests, their involvement, and potentially—their political beliefs. Shifts in both social and political attitudes may occur due to increased independence and the social nature of a college campus. But do these changes have anything to do with students' choice in academic major? In this study, I seek to find if there is a correlation between academic major and political attitudes, and what the causes of these correlations may be. This study is guided by the research question: is there a relationship between academic major and sociopolitical attitudes? I will utilize both quantitative and qualitative methods in order to further explore this question.

The potential for college major to influence sociopolitical attitudes in undergraduate students is great due to a variety of factors. My population—Ball State college students—are at an age where they can register to vote and are likely thinking about many political issues in-depth for the first time. The highly social environment of a college campus lends itself to the exposure to new and different opinions, as well as the potential for socialization within in-groups of an academic major, especially as time goes on. The results of this study, which will reveal which academic majors are more likely to have certain political orientations and the reasons behind these trends, may be of interest to university professors and administrators, as it may help them to better understand their students and the effects that their courses may have on students' views.

Similar studies have been conducted at other colleges and universities, including small military colleges (Guimond, 1999), small universities in Australia (Hastie, 2007) and private Christian universities (Dille, 2017), but not at a mid-size, midwestern, public liberal arts school like Ball State University. By focusing specifically on Ball State students, I hope to capture the political landscape of Ball State as well as contribute to the overall understanding of undergraduate sociopolitical attitudes in relation to academic major.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Determinants of college major

Existing literature identifies demographic characteristics and perceptions of the major as determinants of which area of study an undergraduate student chooses when they start college. These determinants may be useful in understanding the typical characteristics of students within academic majors when examining their political attitudes.

Both race and gender have been found to be factors in students' choice in college major (Dickson, 2017; Wiswall & Zafar, 2014). This could be due to biases in race and gender in terms of self-selecting into majors which typically lead to lower or higher paying jobs. Dickson (2017) found that women—especially Black and Hispanic women—are more likely to be concentrated in the fields of social science and the humanities (p.113). In contrast, Hispanic men are underrepresented in social sciences and humanities, but overrepresented in the fields of computer science and engineering, as are white men. Black men are relatively evenly distributed across all major categories. Black women were found to be overrepresented in both hard and social

sciences, and underrepresented in the fields of business, engineering, and computer science when compared to their peers. The fields in which women and minorities are more concentrated—social sciences and the humanities—are typically lower paying than the fields of business, engineering, and computer science, which they are underrepresented in while men have a higher concentration in these fields.

In addition to the factors of race and gender, Wiswall and Zafar (2014) found that perceived aptitude within the area of study is important for students when determining their major (p. 818). Just as students consider their pre-college abilities in making this choice, they also consider the utility of the major after graduation and their predicted earnings should they pursue a career in their chosen field (p. 811). Degrees within economics, business, computer science, engineering and the hard sciences are thought to yield higher post-graduation earnings than humanities and arts degrees (p. 806).

Determinants of political beliefs

Women and people with lower income are typically more liberal than men and people with higher income. Women are especially more likely to be liberal on social issues than are men, but do not differ significantly in terms of economic beliefs. Another factor which is highly correlated with political ideology is religiosity; those who were more religious—specifically Protestant—are more likely to be conservative (Cao & Selman, 2012; Feldman & Johnson, 2014). Women and people with lower income may be more likely to have a personal connection between political issues and the details of their own lives; as minority groups, they may be more likely to support liberal policies which would serve in their interest and the interests of others like them. This explanation would be consistent with Weeden and Kurzban's (2017) findings.

Various studies determined that within majors, there were not significant differences between grade levels, but attending a university typically caused students to be more open-minded and tolerant. This could be due to the environment of a college campus, which encourages social interactions between groups and could lead to exposure to a variety of viewpoints. As a result, higher levels of education are associated with higher levels of economic conservatism and higher levels of social liberalism (Feldman & Johnson, 2014; Hastie, 2007).

College major and political beliefs

As mentioned above, similar studies have been conducted which examine academic major in relation to sociopolitical views. Hastie (2007) conducted studies at various small Australian universities comparing social science and business students and concluded that social science and humanities majors scored higher on the liberal or left scale, while business and engineering majors scored higher on the conservative or right scale (p. 221). Students in social sciences and humanities likely take courses which revolve around themes such as diversity, systemic structures within society, and oppression of minority groups. These teachings may influence political attitudes. The subject matter of these courses differs considerably from that of business and engineering majors, who likely do not discuss such concepts in their courses. Consistent with Hastie's studies, Dille (2017) found that at a private Christian university, business administration, accounting, and engineering students were more conservative while art, psychology and social work students proved to be more liberal (p. 26). Ringstad (2014), while conducting a study of the political leanings of social work majors, also measured for differing results between students just entering into the program and

students who had been immersed in the program for three to four years (p. 15). It is important to take into account the class rank of students, since their political leanings may change or be reinforced the longer they are exposed to their program.

Previous studies explore the concepts of self-selection and socialization in relation to major and sociopolitical views (Dille, 2017; Guimond, 1990; Guimond & Palmer, 1996; Hastie, 2007). Both are essential to understanding the reasoning behind any potential correlations between major and political attitudes and serve as the hypotheses for these relationships in current research.

Self-selection

Self-selection refers to the possibility that the subject matter, characteristics, interests, and associations of a certain field of study are appealing to students before they enter into the major, causing them to select or be recruited into a major in which they already feel like part of the group (Guimond, 1999; Hastie, 2007). This concept can be seen in studies where significant differences in political beliefs are found in students who have just entered into their respective majors; for example, one study found differences in students' levels of egalitarianism at the beginning of their college career, and concluded that their level of egalitarianism impacted which major they chose (Sidanius, Laar, Levin, & Sinclair, 2003). In previous research examining college major and sociopolitical beliefs, the self-selection hypothesis was supported. Social science students frequently said that their existing viewpoints were confirmed through their major, which supports the idea that they chose their major based on existing beliefs (Hastie, 2007).

Socialization

Longitudinal studies have revealed another strong hypothesis that students are socialized within their major to believe a certain way or have their views confirmed by being immersed in their selected major over a period of time. Depending on the major, the views which may be confirmed will differ; students of the social sciences and humanities may become more liberal over time by means of socialization, while students in business and computer science may become more conservative as time goes on. When conducting a longitudinal study on students when they were freshmen and then again when they were juniors, Guimond (1999) found that as freshmen, there was little difference between the views of social science and engineering students, but after three years the engineering students had become more conservative. Guimond and Palmer (1996) argue that students alter their political views to match those of other students in their major, wanting to conform to the popular opinions within their social group and learning patterns of thought which may influence them in one direction or another. This provides a theoretical framework for the differences in findings between first and third-year students noted above.

Gaining evidence for existing views

In her 2007 study, Hastie postulated further that students may develop better arguments for their existing sociopolitical orientations as a result of the information they learn while completing their degrees. Although this hypothesis has not been tested in previous quantitative studies, both Hastie and Dille suggest that this third hypothesis, which they call accentuation, could account for differences in sociopolitical views between majors. Accentuation refers to the combination of self-selection and socialization, in which a student may self-select into a major based on existing views,

and have those views strengthened and confirmed through the process of socializing within their major, thus allowing them to have better arguments for their already existing views (Dille, 2017; Hastie, 2007). Hastie stated that qualitative research would be needed to support this hypothesis; in this study I will carry out qualitative research in order to test the theory of accentuation.

Definitions of liberalism and conservatism

In my study, I conceptualize liberalism and conservatism as somewhat opposite ends of a unidimensional political binary. In keeping with Hastie's study, liberalism is defined as greater tolerance for minority groups, reduced authoritarianism, and belief in systemic—not individual—causes for social phenomena such as poverty (2007, p. 216). Conservatism then would be defined as less tolerance for minority groups, increased authoritarianism, and belief in individual causes for poverty. Although my conceptualization of liberal and conservative is using a binary approach, it is important to realize that many people hold beliefs that are not completely homogenous. For example, a person holding socially conservative views may be moderate on economic issues, while a person with economically conservative views may take a liberal position on most social issues (Feldman & Johnston, 2014, p. 354). This study will measure beliefs in general terms of more conservative or more liberal, while keeping in mind that individuals may vary in their beliefs.

Hypothesis

After reviewing the literature, I expect to find differences in the sociopolitical orientations of students with differing college majors. Since research shows fairly consistent results, I would expect to find that majors in the social sciences, arts,

journalism, and humanities are more liberal, while majors within business and the hard sciences are more conservative. I also hypothesize that the processes of self-selection, socialization, and gaining evidence for existing views within the major will have an effect on any correlations I may find, and that both of these processes will contribute to students gaining more evidence for existing beliefs as a result of their major.

METHODS

Procedure

This study aims to study undergraduate students at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana. In order to obtain a sample of this population, I sent out a link to an online survey through the Ball State Communications Center to every Ball State students' email. The survey remained open for a time period of three weeks. Since the response rate depended on who was willing to complete the survey, some of the main biases are due to response rate. Since I could not control who took the survey, I have to rely on the various predictors of who is willing to take a survey they received in their email inbox, which may exclude parts of the population and could possibly skew the data. However, the fact that participants could fill out the survey by themselves and in private likely increased the validity of their answers and of my data.

At the end of the survey, respondents were given the option to leave their e-mail address to be contacted for a separate, follow-up interview. I contacted all 62 of these participants who left their contact information one week after the survey closed and heard back from 25 of them. I ended up interviewing nine students due to scheduling

conflicts, lack of continued interest or availability from some students, and other time-related constraints.

Potential ethical concerns of this study were taken into consideration. Since political orientation is a sensitive issue for some students, one concern would be the linking of students to their responses. In order to minimize this risk, students were asked no identifying information in the survey, except for their email address in order to contact participants for a follow-up interview. The email addresses which were collected were copied into a separate file and subsequently removed from the data before the data was saved for further analysis. Participants were also given an informed consent form at the beginning of the survey outlining how data would be stored and assuring them that the survey was anonymous and voluntary. This project underwent review by the Institutional Review Board at Ball State University and was approved.

Participants

The survey received 268 responses from undergraduate students over the age of 18 at Ball State University in Muncie, IN. Responses were narrowed to the most common college majors recorded in the survey, which were then grouped into larger categories by college or general area of study as done in accordance with previous studies conducted on academic major and sociopolitical attitudes. The majors were grouped into categories of social sciences (N=34), telecommunications and communications (N=33), business (N=27), double majors whose two majors would be placed in two different categories (N=24), hard sciences (N=20), criminal justice/political science/legal studies (N=16), humanities (N=16), education (N=15), CAP (N=8), theater (N=6), and computer science (N=6). The remaining majors were removed from the data,

leaving 205 survey responses, or 76% of the data, for further analysis. In the qualitative portion of the study, I interviewed nine students, or 36% of the people who responded to my email.

Variables

The independent variable for this study is undergraduate academic major. The dependent variable for this is sociopolitical views. Each variable will be defined in a particular way:

Undergraduate academic major: The participants' academic major was ascertained by responses to the nominal level question "what is your current academic major?" to which students could write in a response.

Sociopolitical views: Sociopolitical views were measured in a variety of ways, including general measurements of participants' views on economic and social issues, and their responses to specific issues which are often indicative of political leanings. General attitudes were measured by the ordinal level questions "how would you rate your political beliefs when it comes to economic issues (like taxes and government spending on social programs)?" "how would you rate your political beliefs when it comes to social issues (like same-sex marriage and legalization of marijuana)?" and "how would you rate your political views overall?" Respondents were asked to rate their views on a Likert scale of "strongly liberal" to "strongly conservative."

Specific issues were phrased as statements which respondents were asked to respond to using a Likert scale of "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." When deciding which issues to cover, previous studies as well as the 2018 Political Quiz from isidewith.com were consulted. Chosen statements covered the following issues:

abortion, gun control, same-sex marriage, legalization of marijuana, climate change, immigration policy, refugees, the death penalty, attitudes towards racism in America, Affirmative Action policies, drug testing for Welfare recipients, government regulation of businesses, universal health insurance, government spending on social programs, government spending on the military, taxing the rich, equal pay regardless of gender, minimum wage, reduced cost of college, and government aid during economic recession. I asked students to answer with how strongly they agreed with each of the 20 statements (14 liberal and 6 conservative); however, items were re-coded during data analysis so that regardless of how the statement was phrased, a score of 1 would represent "strongly conservative" and a score of 5 would represent "strongly liberal." For analysis purposes, an index of gender and sexuality issues was made by combining responses to statements on abortion, same-sex marriage, and equal pay regardless of gender. An index of racial issues was made by combining responses to statements about racism in America and Affirmative Action policies. An index of immigration issues was made by combining responses to statements about immigration policy and refugees. An index of government aid was made by combining responses to statements about drug testing for Welfare recipients, government regulation of businesses, universal health insurance, government spending on social programs, minimum wage, reduced cost of college, and government aid during economic recession. Issues which were not as easily grouped were analyzed individually. Each index was divided by the number of questions combined together in order to keep means consistent with the means of the attitudes analyzed individually.

Control variables: This study contains five control variables: class rank, gender, race, students' religiosity, and whether the student is registered to vote. Class rank is used as a proxy for individual's age and to measure how long they have been in their major, both of which could affect the outcomes of this study. Gender and race were found in the literature review to be determinants of choice in academic major, while gender, religiosity, and length of time in the major were found to possibly influence sociopolitical attitudes. The control variable of whether the student is registered to vote, which may reveal their political involvement, was used in a very similar study to this one (Dille, 2017).

Whether the student was registered to vote was measured by the nominal level question "are you registered to vote?" Class rank was measured with a nominal level question, with options being freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior. Gender was measured by the nominal level measure with options being male, female, nonbinary, or other with an option for students to write in. In data analysis, results were recoded into the new variables of female and nonbinary and results were recoded so that everyone was either a "0"-not that gender or "1"-that gender in these categories. Race was measured using a nominal level measure with options of White/Caucasian, African American/Black, Hispanic/Latinx, Asian, Native American/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and other with an option for students to write in. In data analysis, results were recoded into the new variables of African American/Black, Hispanic/Latinx and other race and results were recoded so that everyone was either a "0"-not that race or "1"-that race in these categories. Religiosity was measured using an ordinal level question with Likert scale options being very religious, somewhat religious,

not very religious, and not religious at all. In data analysis, results were recoded so that 1=not religious at all and 4=very religious.

Qualitative Interviewing Methods

Survey participants were given the option to leave their email address to be contacted for a separate follow-up interview on the topic in order to collect qualitative data. In the interviews, students were asked their current major, were asked to describe their political beliefs using broad terms, and asked to describe specific experiences within their academic major that they felt had influenced their sociopolitical beliefs. Some questions used to measure these experiences included: "Have your political beliefs changed since you started college at Ball State?" and "Can you tell me about a specific issue—social or economic—that you have shifted your opinion about since declaring your major?" Another question asked in order to obtain specific stories from students was "Is there a specific moment that you remember recognizing that your political views had undergone a shift? If yes, tell me about that moment. If not, is there a specific moment that you remember your political views being confirmed? Tell me about that moment." Students were also asked "If you feel that your political views have shifted since declaring your current major, why do you think that is?" in order to gain their perspective on the factors which influence sociopolitical views, and whether major is one of those factors.

RESULTS

Summary Statistics

Table 1 displays the mean, median, mode, minimum, and maximum response for each of the 19 variables used in the study. The variables of race (white, black, latinx,

other race), gender (male, female, gender nonbinary), and major are broken down into specific responses, as the original variables were recoded into new variables. The mean responses for the variables of gender reveal that 53% of my respondents are female, 39% are male, and 5% identify as nonbinary. The remaining 3% accounts for the respondents who chose not to answer this question. The mean responses for the variables of race reveal that 91% of my respondents are white, 5% are Black, 2% are Latinx, and 2% are another race(s). Again, the remaining 1% accounts for individuals who chose not to answer this question. The means for each major category reveal that 16% of my respondents are social science majors, 16% are communications majors, 13% are business majors, 10% are hard science majors, 12% are double majors, 8% are criminal justice majors, 7% are education majors, 8% are humanities majors, 4% are CAP majors, 3% are theater majors, and 3% are computer science majors. The mode response for the variable of religiosity reveals that most of my respondents said that they are not religious at all. The mode response for the voter registration variable reveals that most of my respondents are registered to vote. In terms of political ideologies, the mode responses for variables measuring general views on social issues, economic issues, and overall political leanings shows that most respondents say they are strongly liberal on social issues, economic issues, and overall. However, looking at the mean responses reveals that respondents were somewhere between moderate and somewhat liberal, on average, for economic issues and overall political leanings. When looking at the specific political issues, the median responses show that most respondents have strongly liberal views for the issues of abortion, legalization of marijuana, climate change, military spending, and gender/sexuality issues.

Respondents on average have somewhat liberal views for the issues of the death penalty, raising taxes on the rich, and racial issues, and moderate views on government aid and immigration.

Comparing Means

Table 2 displays the mean scores for each major for each issue. The scores are coded as such so that a score closer to 1 is more conservative, while a score closer to 5 is more liberal. Looking at the means, it is revealed that there are some differences in major scores for the issues of immigration, government aid, abortion, racial issues, climate change, the death penalty, and raising taxes on the rich. For the issue of immigration, the highest score is 3.68 (hard science) and the lowest is 2.00 (computer science). For government aid, the highest score is 4.03 (hard science), while the lowest score is 2.97 (criminal justice). For abortion, the highest score is 4.80 (hard science) while the lowest score is 2.74 (business). For racial issues, the highest score is 4.50 (CAP) and the lowest score is 2.96 (business). On climate change, the highest score is 4.90 (hard science), while the lowest score is 3.26 (business). On the death penalty, the highest score is 4.38 (CAP) and the lowest is 2.88 (criminal justice). For raising taxes on the rich, the highest score is 4.75 (CAP) and the lowest score is 2.41 (business). Other issues, like gender/sexuality issues, legalization of marijuana, gun control, and military spending, seem to have less variation amongst majors. For gender/sexuality issues, the highest score is 4.78 (hard science) while the lowest score is 3.53 (business). For legalization of marijuana, the highest score is 4.57 (theater) while the lowest score is 3.65 (business). For gun control, the highest score is 4.56 (social science) and the

lowest score is 3.17 (computer science). On military spending, the highest score is 5.00 (CAP) and the lowest is 3.22 (business). From a preliminary look, it appears that some majors—like social science, hard science, and CAP—stand out as more liberal, while others—such as business, criminal justice, and computer science—stand out as being more conservative. I ran a series of ordinary least squares regression models to test whether these differences are statistically significant after accounting for my control variables.

Differences Between Majors

Table 3, Table 4, and Table 5 display the OLS regression models run between dependent variable—each social or political attitude—and the independent variables—the different majors and all of my control variables. Social science was the largest group of students and was fairly liberal, and was therefore used as the reference group, so all coefficients are in comparison to the results of social science students. I collected data to determine whether—generally speaking—major matters when considering sociopolitical attitudes. Looking at the results supports the hypothesis that major does matter for most issues, with the exception of the death penalty and military spending, where differences were only marginally significant, and the legalization of marijuana, where there were no significant differences found between majors, even when accounting for control variables

For attitudes on racial issues (Table 3), significant differences were found between social science and business, with business students scoring lower, meaning less liberally. Significant differences were also found between social science and

humanities and double majors—both of whom are more conservative on racial issues than social science students. Differences between social science and communications and computer science—both of which score lower or less liberally—were marginally significant. For attitudes on gender and sexuality issues (Table 3), significant differences were found between social science and business, as well as social science and humanities. Both business majors and humanities majors are slightly less liberal than their social science counterparts. Double majors and communications majors are also slightly less liberal than social science majors, and these differences were found to be marginally significant. On issues of immigration (Table 3), business and computer science majors are significantly less liberal than social science majors, while the difference between social science majors and double majors is marginally significant. For government aid (Table 3), business majors scored significantly lower or less liberally than social science majors, as did communications and criminal justice majors. Computer science majors also scored less liberally than social science majors, and this difference was marginally significant. In collection of qualitative data, one student offered a possible explanation for why computer science majors may have less liberal attitudes on government aid and the funding of social programs:

Computer science is pretty separate from politics. It's just there. We aren't actively discussing, you know, socioeconomic stuff in computer science. Most of it is just "hey, my code isn't working, why isn't it working?"

This testimony suggests that some majors, such as computer science, do not actively discuss social and political issues in class, which provides less of a chance for students to be exposed to different attitudes.

Comparing means hinted that abortion (Table 4) was a divisive issue, which the regression analysis confirmed. Business, humanities, and criminal justice all scored less liberally than social science; business and humanities were significantly different while criminal justice was marginally significant. Comparing means also suggested that there was little variation on gun control (Table 4); however, the regression analysis reveals that communications, business, double majors, and computer science all scored less liberally than social science. The difference for business majors was significant, while differences for the others were marginally significant. On the issue of climate change (Table 4), significant differences were found for business and criminal justice majors, both of which had lower or less liberal scores than social science.

The most conservative attitudes were found in the issue of taxing the rich (Table 5); significantly conservative attitudes were found for communications, business, double majors, criminal justice, and computer science. This can be seen in the large coefficient sizes predicting attitudes towards taxing the rich, which suggest more sizeable differences in relation to social science majors than for other sociopolitical attitudes. Humanities and theater majors also had differences that were marginally significant, although theater majors scored more liberally than the reference group of social science on this issue. In the collection of qualitative data, one student offered up one explanation for why computer science majors may have more conservative attitudes on economic issues such as raising taxes on the rich:

Computer science jobs are very well-paying, and then it's like, I'm gonna be losing a lot of that if we have increased taxes on the higher end.

This may provide an explanation as to why business majors, who typically earn higher-paying jobs, have a significant difference on this issue as well.

After thorough analysis of all of my findings, I determined that hard science majors, education majors, CAP majors, and theater majors are all fairly liberal. These groups did not have differences that were statistically significant from social science, which is also fairly liberal, except for theater majors, who scored more liberally on the issue of taxing the rich. On average, communications majors, business majors, double majors, criminal justice majors, humanities majors, and computer science majors are less liberal than social science majors. The majors which had the most consistently statistically significant differences compared to social science majors were business, criminal justice, and computer science majors.

Interviews

In addition to discovering the relationship between major and views on certain political issues, I was also interested in the question of why these relationships exist, and if they reflect a change in beliefs based on choice of major, or rather reflect that a certain type of student is likely to pick a certain major. In order to further explore the hypotheses of socialization and self-selection, as well as Hastie's (2007) hypothesis that students learn more information from their major classes that helps them to better argue their existing views, I conducted a series of interviews.

Socialization

Some evidence of socialization was found in my qualitative analysis. One student, a theater major, discussed his perceived shift in attitudes on social issues since being a theater major since their freshman year at Ball State:

I don't know if I know anyone in theater that isn't like hardcore on the left. That's like part of their identity. So that probably has influenced me socially and like to be aware of their concerns, and like why they're on the left and consider what they're concerned about.

This anecdote suggests that the student has become more socially liberal over time as a result of being in a major where other students have strongly liberal attitudes, which would support the socialization hypothesis, which says that students alter their political beliefs to match those of other students in their area of study.

Socialization can affect other behaviors as well; for example, one student in telecommunications discussed their aptitude for paying attention to current events in the media:

Being a TCOM major has made me pay more attention to the media, because I didn't pay a lot of attention to the media in high school because I really didn't care, but the way the media's been recently and because I've been in TCOM classes I've had to pay a lot of attention to it so it's kind of been...informative. Just keeping up-to-date with things and having a general feeling for what's going on.

This suggests that majors within communications may be more adept at paying attention to the news and being more politically involved, although it does not reveal more conservative or more liberal attitudes.

Self-selection

Support for the self-selection hypothesis was found during the collection of qualitative data as well. Self-selection is the idea that students who already have certain political views choose a major which interests them—perhaps because of those views. In this case, the reason for a relationship between attitude and major wouldn't be because of major content, but because of the student's attitudes coming in to college. One social work student described their decision to choose their major, and how that relates to their political views and personal values:

It's so good because I've always had a love for people and I want to learn about them, I want to understand them, and I want to help them. That is one of the things that I've always been interested in. Like, since I became a teenager that's always been something that I've done.

This general attitude of helping others and being tolerant, which is part of how liberalism was operationalized in this study, could be a predictor of selecting a major in the social sciences.

Another student, a double major, shared their reasoning for choosing their majors—which come from social science and humanities:

Part of the reason why I chose my major is I wanted to have a more open concept of the world and of how society works, so I think it was just like kind of...I knew that's what I wanted. I wanted to go to a college where there was a lot of diversity where I could talk to them and learn about them. I think I had that passion for learning about new people from like a long time ago. So I think that's why I chose my major...which just continues the cycle even more.

Tolerance and knowledge of diversity—another indicator for liberalism—played a role in this student's choice to enter social science and humanities. This could suggest that more liberal-minded students are more likely to self-select into these fields, explaining the correlation between liberal attitudes and social science seen in the quantitative analysis.

Gaining evidence for existing views

Strong support for the hypothesis that students learn information in their majors which helps them back up their existing political beliefs—or accentuation—was also found. Various students commented on this trend, including one international business major:

Sometimes in economics class we would watch these videos and it would give me more background on what I believe and why. Previously, I didn't have any support I guess, but going into economics class gives me more support for my arguments when I talk about them.

This story suggests that the student gained information in class which helps them to support their existing beliefs, which would support the hypothesis of accentuation, a combination of the self-selection and socialization theories. A social work student expressed a similar idea in her interview:

I might have believed in something before I came to Ball State but now I have actual information to back it up, I guess. Instead of just saying, "well, I believe in this, I can actually say 'this is why, and here's the evidence for it.'"

Yet another student—a double major in social science and humanities—discussed how they feel their beliefs have deepened since coming to college and taking courses within the sociology department:

I think I've slightly gone more liberal, but really I feel like I've just deepened my beliefs, and like become more sure of myself. I was always tolerant, but by learning about gender, and white male privilege, it makes me feel stronger as a feminist and things like that. I've always believed something, but now I have a reason to believe it.

Another common, but related, theme is that of strengthening views and gaining more evidence for existing beliefs because of heterogeneity within the major. One student in mathematics education discussed how hearing beliefs different from their own allowed them to strengthen their beliefs:

Since there's some people that don't have those views, I think that my views have gotten stronger. So with talking to people who don't have those views, I'm interested and then I go look up stuff that backs up my side and think about why they're wrong--basically.

This story suggests that the student has literally come up with better arguments for their beliefs after being confronted with differing viewpoints within their major. Another student echoed this idea, referencing their experience as a theater major who holds some differing views from most theater students:

So basically anytime I go anywhere in the theater department, or just like being in college in general, like, there are very much people who are opposite of even my politics, and so it's a good opportunity for me to always be challenged, always question what I believe.

This suggests that students are presented with opportunities to challenge their opinions when faced with different viewpoints as well. Being in a major with a diverse array of political views may provide opportunities to both strengthen and question existing beliefs.

Interpretation of Findings

Taking all of my data into account, my findings both support and refute my hypothesis. I predicted that there would be significant relationships between majors and political attitudes, which data analysis reveals that there are. I also predicted that social science majors would have more liberal views and business majors would have more conservative views, which is supported on most issues according to the OLS regression analysis. I predicted that socialization and self-selection would be factors in the relationships, which my qualitative data supported. Finally, I predicted that Hastie's hypothesis of accentuation would be supported, which data from qualitative interviews did support. However, analysis reveals that hard science majors have more liberal views than I expected, and humanities majors have more conservative views than I predicted, as do communications and criminal justice majors. One explanation for the views of hard science majors is the scientific backing associated with some attitudes; for example, hard science majors with a background in biology or health science may be more liberal on abortion since evidence supports the procedure as medically safe, and science majors may have factual evidence for the effects of climate change on the

planet's atmosphere. Additionally, the surge of younger populations into this field, including women and racial minorities, may reflect a more liberal population. Some explanations for the results for communications and criminal justice majors may be the way in which majors are grouped; while journalism majors on their own may be more liberal, when grouped with other majors like telecommunications, they may show less liberal scores. The same reasoning applies to the criminal justice category, which includes criminal justice, legal studies, and political science majors. Students in social science are likely exposed to more social concepts than students from business or computer science, which may also account for the consistent difference in attitudes between these groups. Unfortunately, I was not able to conduct interviews with students from the hard sciences or criminal justice to see why those differences occurred.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to identify relationships between academic major and sociopolitical orientation, along with the reasoning behind these relationships. Although previous studies have been conducted which examine this topic, including another undergraduate thesis, *Predictable Politics* (Dille, 2017), there was a lack of literature for a mid-size, midwestern, public, liberal arts school like Ball State University. Quantitative analysis was used to identify statistically significant trends between social science majors, communications majors, business majors, double majors, hard science majors, criminal justice majors, education majors, humanities majors, CAP majors, theater majors, and computer science majors. Qualitative interviews were conducted in order to see whether student responses supported aggregate findings and identify reasons why

these relationships may exist. Analysis of the data collected from 205 surveys revealed that there are significant differences between majors in terms of responses to both social and economic issues, which supported my hypothesis.

In general, social science majors appeared to be mostly liberal, which is consistent with previous findings (Dille, 2017; Hastie, 2007). In comparison to social science majors, communications majors, business majors, double majors, humanities majors, and computer science majors scored less liberally on a variety of issues—including racial attitudes, gender and sexuality attitudes, immigration attitudes, government aid attitudes, abortion attitudes, gun control attitudes, climate change attitudes, military spending attitudes, and taxes on the rich attitudes. These differences between majors were either statistically significant or marginally significant. It is interesting to note that business majors—a field in which men are overrepresented and women are underrepresented—scored significantly less liberally on issues of gender and sexuality and abortion (Dickson, 2017). Business majors scored less liberally than social science majors in a total of nine categories, including economic issues like government aid, military spending, and raising taxes on the rich. These findings in relation to economic issues seem to support Weedan and Kurzban's (2017) claim that self-interest plays a role in political beliefs. Business majors typically are placed into higher-paying jobs after graduation, and Wiswall and Zafar (2015) postulated that students choose their major based on the perceived utility and payoff of their field post-graduation. Computer science majors, who also typically are placed into well-paying jobs, also scored less liberally than social science majors in economic issues of government aid and taxes on the rich. These findings support the theory that students

self-select into majors which align with their own personal interests and beliefs (Guimond, 1999; Hastie, 2007). In contrast, social science majors study concepts which may yield those attitudes associated with liberalism, such as tolerance of minority groups and the belief in systemic—not individual—causes for social problems like poverty (Hastie, 2007).

Due to previous research, I somewhat expected to find that business and computer science majors are less liberal than their social science counterparts; however, some majors had more conservative attitudes when I expected them to be more liberal. For instance, in this study humanities majors scored less liberally than social science majors on four different issues, including the social issues of gender and sexuality issues and abortion. This is surprising, as women tend to be more highly represented within the humanities, and especially minority women (Dickson, 2017). Humanities majors also differed significantly from social science majors for attitudes towards taxing the rich; this stands in opposition to the hypothesis that individuals choose major based on their self-interest and perceived income after graduation, as humanities majors typically are placed in lower paying jobs than business and computer science majors (Weedan & Kurzban, 2017; Wiswall & Zafar, 2015).

Another unexpected finding was that hard science majors are just as liberal as social science majors. Since previous studies found that engineering and technological fields like computer science were more conservative, I expected science—as a part of the STEM field—to show similar results (Dille, 2017; Hastie, 2007). However, OLS regression models showed no significant differences between hard science and social science majors, who are fairly liberal. When comparing means, hard science majors

scored very liberally on issues of climate change, gender and sexuality, abortion, and gun control. Looking at these issues gives insight to why hard science majors scored more liberally; majors like biology, chemistry, and natural resource management may have more scientific evidence to support their beliefs in these areas.

Of course, this study has some limitations. My qualitative data collection was somewhat constrained by time and the responses I received from participants; I was unable to interview students from all major categories. Gaining qualitative feedback from students from all the major categories may have given me additional insights into the reasoning behind differences between social science majors and other majors on a variety of issues. Another limitation is the somewhat small response rate of my survey; the link was sent to Ball State's campus of 15,000 undergraduate students, and only a fraction completed the questionnaire. Additional participants in this portion of the study could have resulted in more statistically significant results as well as allowed for the analysis of more majors, although I was able to find statistically significant differences between majors with the data that was available to me. To make data analysis less complex, variables which would further operationalize college major were not included; for example, how long the student had been in their current major and if they had ever changed their major throughout their college career. This information could have provided more insight into the socialization hypothesis I aimed to explore; future studies could include these variables in the data analysis to see if these aspects of college major have any effect on their relationship with political views.

The results of this study should be considered by the personnel at American colleges and universities, specifically that of Ball State University, in order to better

understand the students and their political leanings. Additionally, professors may use the qualitative findings of this study to gain more insight into the effects that their classes have on students, both in terms of socialization and in gaining evidence for existing beliefs through material discussed (or not discussed) within their course. The qualitative interviews reveal that the information students learn in class often arm students with stronger arguments for their existing beliefs, or otherwise confirms or influences their opinions, as does the social context which the professor and students create within the classroom. The overall findings of this study are consistent with previous studies done on the same topic at different types of higher education institutions, with some exceptions. Additionally, the qualitative portion of this study builds on existing research on self-selection and socialization and fills a gap in research by identifying other reasons for existing relationships between academic major and sociopolitical attitudes.

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Table 1. Summary Statistics

Variable	Mean	Median	Mode	Min	Max
Economic issues (1= strongly conservative)	3.32	4	5	1	5
Social issues (1=strongly conservative)	4.09	5	5	1	5
General political beliefs (1=strongly conservative)	3.60	4	5	1	5
Abortion	3.75	5	5	1	5
Legalization of marijuana	4.05	5	5	1	5
Climate change	4.15	5	5	1	5
Death penalty	3.34	4	4	1	5
Military spending	4.10	5	5	1	5
Raise taxes on the rich	3.79	4	5	1	5
Gender and sexuality issues	4.00	5	5	1	5
Racial issues	3.78	4	5	1	5
Immigration issues	3.16	3	3	1	5
Government aid issues	3.25	3	4	1	5
Social Science	0.16	0	0	0	1
Communications	0.16	0	0	0	1
Business	0.13	0	0	0	1
Hard Science	0.10	0	0	0	1
Double Major	0.12	0	0	0	1
Criminal Justice	0.08	0	0	0	1
Education	0.07	0	0	0	1
Humanities	0.08	0	0	0	1
CAP	0.04	0	0	0	1
Theater	0.03	0	0	0	1
Computer Science	0.03	0	0	0	1
Registered to vote (yes=1)	1.14	1	1	1	2
Religiosity	2.20	2	1	1	4
Class rank	2.50	3	4	1	4
White	0.91	1	1	0	1
Black	0.05	0	0	0	1
Latinx	0.02	0	0	0	1
Other Race	0.02	0	0	0	1
Male	0.39	0	0	0	1
Female	0.53	1	1	0	1
Gender Nonbinary	0.05	0	0	0	1

N=205

Table 2. Comparing Means

	Gender/ sexuality issues	Immigration	Government Aid	Abortion	Marijuana	Gun Control	Racial Issues	Climate Change	Death penalty	Raising taxes on the rich	Military spending
SOCIAL SCIENCE	4.73	3.57	3.88	4.50	4.28	4.56	4.41	4.53	3.50	4.62	4.38
CCIM	4.20	3.12	3.12	3.61	3.91	3.85	3.81	3.97	3.21	3.70	4.03
BUSINESS	3.53	2.50	2.24	2.74	3.65	3.26	2.96	3.26	2.85	2.41	3.22
HARD SCIENCE	4.78	3.68	4.03	4.80	4.55	4.84	4.23	4.90	3.45	4.65	4.80
DOUBLE MAJOR	4.07	2.90	2.99	3.58	4.04	3.71	3.38	4.08	3.13	3.63	3.88
CRIMINAL JUSTICE	3.96	2.94	2.97	3.25	4.13	3.75	3.34	3.38	2.88	3.83	3.88
EDUCATION	4.43	3.37	3.40	3.80	4.00	4.20	4.17	4.33	3.67	4.13	4.33
HUMANITIES	3.98	3.53	3.38	3.19	4.06	4.31	3.63	4.69	3.50	3.75	4.19
CAP	4.63	3.38	3.61	4.75	3.88	4.50	4.50	4.88	4.38	4.75	5.00
THEATER	4.43	3.25	3.38	3.67	4.57	3.83	3.67	4.00	3.67	3.50	4.50
COMPUTER SCIENCE	3.89	2.00	3.00	3.33	3.67	3.17	3.25	4.17	4.17	2.83	3.67

Table 3. Results from OLS Regression Models Predicting Relationship Between Major and Racial, Gender/Sexuality, Immigration, and Government Aid Attitudes

Variable	Racial Attitudes		Gender and Sexuality Attitudes		Immigration Attitudes		Government Aid Attitudes	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>
<i>Majors</i>								
Communications Major	-0.44†	0.26	-0.35†	0.20	-0.32	0.26	-0.58*	0.22
Business Major	-1.13***	0.28	-0.79***	0.22	-0.82**	0.28	-1.26***	0.24
Hard Sciences Major	-0.16	0.29	-0.09	0.23	0.05	0.29	0.14	0.26
Double Major	-0.84***	0.28	-0.39†	0.22	-0.50†	0.28	-0.64**	0.24
Criminal Justice Major	-0.82	0.32	-0.39	0.26	-0.43	0.32	-0.55*	0.28
Education Major	-0.10	0.32	-0.01	0.25	-0.09	0.32	-0.29	0.28
Humanities Major	-0.69*	0.31	-0.59*	0.25	0.05	0.31	-0.31	0.27
CAP Major	0.12	0.41	-0.20	0.32	-0.19	0.41	-0.30	0.38
Theater Major	-0.61	0.45	-0.04	0.36	-0.19	0.45	-0.39	0.40
Computer Science Major	-0.86†	0.46	-0.53	0.37	-1.30**	0.46	-0.69†	0.40
<i>Controls</i>								
Class Rank	-0.05	0.07	-0.06	0.06	-0.07	0.07	-0.06	0.07
Voter Registration	0.27	0.22	0.19	0.17	0.15	0.22	-0.09	0.19
Religiosity	-0.26***	0.07	-0.47***	0.05	-0.24**	0.07	-0.32***	0.06
Black	0.41	0.35	0.13	0.28	0.22	0.35	0.72*	0.32
Latinx	-0.02	0.53	0.64	0.42	0.24	0.53	0.16	0.46
Other Race	0.14	0.50	0.46	0.39	0.63	0.49	0.64	0.43
Female	0.52***	0.12	0.26***	0.10	0.38**	0.12	0.09	0.11
Gender Nonbinary	-0.53***	0.12	-0.28***	0.10	-0.39**	0.12	-0.11	0.11
<i>R</i> ²	0.32		0.43		0.24		0.38	

†*p* < .10. **p* < .05. ***p* < .01. ****p* < .001.

Table 4. Results from OLS Regression Models Predicting Relationship Between Major and Abortion, Gun Control, Marijuana, and Climate Change Attitudes

Variable	Abortion Attitudes		Gun Control Attitudes		Marijuana Attitudes		Climate Change Attitudes	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>
<i>Majors</i>								
Communications Major	-0.49	0.30	-0.51†	0.29	0.02	0.28	-0.38	0.27
Business Major	-1.03**	0.32	-0.94**	0.32	-0.02	0.30	-0.87**	0.29
Hard Sciences Major	0.17	0.35	0.31	0.34	0.40	0.32	0.29	0.31
Double Major	-0.39	0.33	-0.60†	0.32	0.19	0.30	-0.22	0.30
Criminal Justice Major	-0.66†	0.38	-0.56	0.37	0.22	0.35	-0.77*	0.34
Education Major	-0.17	0.38	-0.22	0.37	0.13	0.35	0.02	0.34
Humanities Major	-0.97**	0.37	-0.11	0.36	0.17	0.34	0.30	0.33
CAP Major	0.09	0.48	-0.05	0.47	-0.38	0.44	0.27	0.43
Theater Major	-0.46	0.53	-0.61	0.52	0.65	0.50	-0.36	0.48
Computer Science Major	-0.64	0.54	-0.98†	0.53	-0.25	0.50	-0.01	0.49
<i>Controls</i>								
Class Rank	-0.01	0.10	-0.05	0.08	0.08	0.07	-0.09	0.08
Voter Registration	0.10	0.26	0.15	0.26	-0.45†	0.24	0.03	0.23
Religiosity	-0.80***	0.08	-0.27**	0.08	-0.44***	0.07	-0.36***	0.07
Black	0.76†	0.41	0.73†	0.40	0.75†	0.38	0.24	0.37
Latinx	0.97	0.62	0.42	0.61	0.43	0.58	0.57	0.56
Other Race	0.41	0.58	0.38	0.57	0.79	0.57	0.38	0.52
Female	0.38**	0.14	0.68***	0.14	-0.09	0.13	0.25†	0.13
Gender Nonbinary	-0.39**	0.14	-0.69***	0.14	0.10	0.13	-0.27*	0.13
<i>R</i> ²	0.48		0.29		0.23		0.32	

†*p* < .10. **p* < .05. ***p* < .01. ****p* < .001.

Table 5. Results from OLS Regression Models Predicting Relationship Between Major and Death Penalty, Military Spending, and Taxes on the Rich Attitudes

Variable	Death Penalty Attitudes		Military Spending Attitudes		Taxes on the Rich Attitudes	
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>
<i>Majors</i>						
Communications Major	-0.18	0.41	-0.13	0.25	-0.73**	0.30
Business Major	-0.46	0.33	-0.82**	0.27	-1.78***	0.32
Hard Sciences Major	0.03	0.36	0.44	0.29	0.03	0.34
Double Major	-0.31	0.38	-0.27	0.27	-0.71**	0.32
Criminal Justice Major	-0.48	0.36	-0.27	0.31	-0.82**	0.38
Education Major	0.17	0.42	0.16	0.31	-0.27	0.38
Humanities Major	0.63	0.41	0.01	0.31	-0.67†	0.37
CAP Major	0.97†	0.53	0.54	0.40	0.14	0.48
Theater Major	0.17	0.59	0.23	0.44	0.97†	0.53
Computer Science Major	0.84	0.60	-0.44	0.45	-1.57**	0.54
<i>Controls</i>						
Class Rank	-0.01	0.08	0.01	0.07	-0.06	0.09
Voter Registration	-0.25	0.28	-0.36†	0.21	0.17	0.25
Religiosity	-0.05	0.09	-0.32	0.07	-0.32***	0.08
Black	0.24	0.45	0.59†	0.34	0.79†	0.41
Latinx	-0.48	0.69	0.64	0.51	-0.07	0.62
Other Race	0.58	0.64	0.67	0.48	0.66	0.58
Female	0.15	0.16	0.01	0.12	0.24	0.14
Gender Nonbinary	-0.17	0.16	-0.01	0.12	-0.26†	0.14
<i>R</i> ²	0.10		0.29		0.36	

†*p* < .10. **p* < .05. ***p* < .01. ****p* < .001.



Office of Research Integrity
Institutional Review Board (IRB)
2000 University Avenue
Muncie, IN 47306-0155
Phone: 765-285-5070

DATE: January 30, 2018
TO: Olivia Power
FROM: Ball State University IRB
RE: IRB protocol # 1185564-1
TITLE: Academic Major and Sociopolitical Views
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project
ACTION: APPROVED
DECISION DATE: January 30, 2018
REVIEW TYPE: **EXEMPT**

The Institutional Review Board reviewed your protocol on January 30, 2018 and has determined the procedures you have proposed are appropriate for exemption under the federal regulations. As such, there will be no further review of your protocol, and you are cleared to proceed with the procedures outlined in your protocol. As an exempt study, there is no requirement for continuing review. Your protocol will remain on file with the IRB as a matter of record.

Exempt Categories:

	Category 1: Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as (i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.
X	Category 2: Research involving the use of educational test (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior
	Category 3: Research involving the use of educational test (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior that is not exempt under category 2, if: (i) the human subjects are elected or appointed officials or candidates for public office; or (ii) Federal statute(s) require(s) without exception that the confidentiality of the personally identifiable information will be maintained throughout the research and thereafter.
	Category 4: Research involving the collection of study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if these sources are publicly available or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

	Category 5: Research and demonstration projects which are conducted by or subject to the approval of Department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate or otherwise examine: (i) public benefit or service programs; (ii) procedures for obtaining benefits or services under those programs; (iii) possible changes in methods or levels of payment for benefits or services under these programs.
	Category 6: Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies, (i) if wholesome foods without additives are consumed or (ii) if a food is consumed which contains a food ingredient at or below the level and for a use found to be safe, by the Food and Drug Administration or approved by the Environmental Protection Agency or the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Editorial Notes:

1. Exempt with Informed Consent for the interview

While your project does not require continuing review, it is the responsibility of the P.I. (and, if applicable, faculty supervisor) to inform the IRB if the procedures presented in this protocol are to be modified or if problems related to human research participants arise in connection with this project. **Any procedural modifications must be evaluated by the IRB before being implemented, as some modifications may change the review status of this project.** Please contact (ORI Staff) if you are unsure whether your proposed modification requires review or have any questions. Proposed modifications should be addressed in writing and submitted electronically to the IRB (<http://www.bsu.edu/irb>) for review. Please reference the above IRB protocol number in any communication to the IRB regarding this project.

Reminder: Even though your study is exempt from the relevant federal regulations of the Common Rule (45 CFR 46, subpart A), you and your research team are not exempt from ethical research practices and should therefore employ all protections for your participants and their data which are appropriate to your project.

D. Clark Dickin, PhD/Chair
Institutional Review Board

Christopher Mangelli, JD, MS, MEd, CIP/
Director
Office of Research Integrity